

Opening Statement of Congressman Buddy Carter
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce Hearing on
“Consumers Beware: Increased Risks During the COVID-19 Pandemic”
July 9, 2020

As Prepared for Delivery

Madame Chair, thank you for holding today’s hearing and for the committee’s efforts to highlight the issues facing consumers during this pandemic.

Everyday, we hear and see stories about people utilizing this time to scam, defraud, and steal money from our fellow citizens.

We are living through unprecedented times and are seeing bad actors try to take advantage of Americans during this pandemic.

I am pleased to see the Trump Administration step up and fight back. Earlier this year, President Trump signed an Executive Order on hoarding and price gouging and we have seen the Federal Trade Commission ramp up its efforts to both educate consumers and pursue actions against bad actors.

Whether it’s price gouging on personal protective equipment or scamming money from senior citizens, there is a continued need for agencies like the FTC to work with private sector partners to strengthen protections for Americans.

I think it’s also important to look at the progress that has been made by the FTC during this pandemic – they certainly have met this challenge.

Since January, there have been over 122,000 reports to the FTC regarding fraud and other unsolicited activities.

Of that number, 63,000 were for fraud for a total loss of \$79 million.

The FTC has done a good job of fighting this behavior, but they haven’t done it alone.

The private sector has taken a proactive approach in protecting their customers and negating these fraudulent actions.

It is this continued partnership that can ensure maximum effectiveness while addressing all aspects of the problems we’ve seen popping up across the country.

I have introduced bipartisan legislation, the Combating Pandemic Scams Act, which is designed to strengthen the partnership between federal agencies overseeing these issues.

They would be required to disseminate that information to the public, including how to spot and report these scams, in a way that is easily accessible and digestible and in a manner that prioritizes senior citizens and people with infirmities and disabilities.

I firmly believe that more action in this space will help us, as a committee, address these actions across the country.

Americans around the U.S. should be able to protect themselves and one way to do that is arming them with up-to-date information on the practices to avoid.

If they can spot this and report it to the appropriate agencies, they can help to protect their neighbors and communities.

I look forward to today's hearing and our efforts to protect Americans against fraud, and I hope that we will be able to continue bipartisan dialogue on solutions.

I believe this is an area where we can find common ground and today's hearing is a step in the right direction.

With that, I want to yield my remaining time to my colleague, Mr. Hudson of North Carolina.